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ABSTRACT

This study explored beliefs of administrators and teachers in Colorado about applying the concept that "all students can learn" to students with learning disabilities. The following topics are reviewed: components of standards-based education (SBE), the least restrictive environment, individualized education plans (IEPs), establishing high academic standards for students with learning disabilities, limits of the "all students can learn" concept, and the relationship of IEPs and SBE. One study objective was to determine whether differences existed in the beliefs of staff who held various positions. For each of two school districts, interviews were conducted with two school board members, the superintendent, the curriculum director, a special education director, two principals, two special education teachers, and four general education teachers. Responses were categorized as either ambivalent, high belief, or low belief in the concept that all students can learn. The high belief group expressed views that SBE could or should be used to close the learning gap between students with learning disabilities and their peers who do not have difficulties. Central office administrators (superintendent, special education director, and curriculum coordinator) were the only category of staff that consistently held high beliefs that all students can learn. (Contains 41 references.) (SW)

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WHOM DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY "ALL" ? EDUCATOR BELIEFS REGARDING STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES ACHIEVING COLORADO'S EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

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The proponents of Standards Based-Education promote the concept that all students can learn (meet the standards). This study examines the beliefs of educators regarding the concept of all students can learn by using students with Learning Disabilities as a metaphor for any group of students who may not learn in traditional ways.

The last twelve years have produced numerous reports expressing concern over the academic achievement of American students. These include A Nation at Risk, The Paideia Proposal, and High School as well as various NAEP reports. Missing in these and other critiques of educational reform are discussions regarding those students identified as requiring special education services. Thurlow and Ysseldyke (1993) see this omission as a result of an "out of sight, out of mind" response.

The concept of educational standards is currently receiving considerable attention at the national, state, and local levels (ie. goals 2000). It is claimed that standards-based education, will lead to increased ability to compete in the world of work and higher education. Proponents of standards-based education (Marshall and Tucker 1992, Resnick, Briars, and Lesgold, 1992 Resnick and Simmons, 1993) are explicit regarding their beliefs in the inclusion of all student groups for a movement toward higher educational standards and the philosophy that all students can learn at higher levels than previously expected.

Colorado's House Bill 93-1313, which implements standards-based education defines standards as a "compilation of specific statements of what a

student should know or be able to do relative to a particular academic area" (22-53-402 (4)). The legislation states that the standards will be sufficient to enable every student "to become an effective citizen of Colorado and the United States, a productive member of the labor force, and a successful lifelong learner" (22-53-403 (2)). H.B. 93-1313 specifically requires that the IEP will be used to determine whether a student with disabilities will meet individual or district standards.

The concept of standards is not new to education in general or special education in particular. In the 1950s Ralph Tyler promoted the use of objectives as a tool for directing teaching and in the 1960s Bloom and Mager promoted behavioral objectives (King and Evans, 1991). Ysseldyke, Thurlow, and Shriner (1992) echo Tyler's emphasis on the importance of objectives in teaching students with disabilities. (p. 38)

In the 1950s special educators attempted to address the issue of what special education students needed to know by developing curriculum guides which fit the needs of their local school systems. Kolstoe (1970) describes early efforts to design a system of standards that defined what students identified as Educable Mentally Retarded must know and be able to do -- without specifying the curriculum.

Falvey, Coots, Bishop, and Grenot-Scheyer (1989) refer to mastery learning as being synonymous with Standards-Based Education and an effective educational tool for both disabled and non-disabled students. (p. 153) The National Center on

Educational Outcomes at the University of Minnesota is currently studying issues regarding outcomes for students with disabilities.

Colorado's legislation which mandated standards-based education, acknowledges disabled students as a special category and expresses the belief that all students can learn. However, the beliefs of policy implementors such as teachers, administrators, and school board members will determine the effectiveness of a policy based on the belief that all students can learn.

Eleven percent of the total public schools' population are categorized as disabled. Of all handicapping conditions identified for special education services, students labeled as Learning Disabled (L.D.) make up the largest percentage (5%) of the total school population and 45% of all students with disabilities (Moore, Strang, Schwartz, & Braddock, 1988, p. 27). In Colorado, students labeled as Learning Disabled make up 4.85% of the school age population and are the largest group of students with identified disabilities.

Students with Learning Disabilities were the focus of this study since they comprise the largest group of disabled students and those most expected to meet the newly developed academic standards.

Standards-Based Education

Standards-Based Education (SBE) promotes the following concepts: (1) clearly stated goals and objectives will help students focus on what they need to learn, (2) all students can learn, (3) time should be variable rather than fixed, (4)

assessment must be complex and not superficial. (Marshall and Tucker 1992, Resnick, Briars, and Lesgold (1992) and Spady (1991).

Clearly Stated Goals and Objectives

Proponents of SBE contend that it is not sufficient to have a clear, well defined curriculum because while students may know what is expected on a day-to-day basis, they do not know what is ultimately expected of them. Additionally, teachers frequently emphasize covering the curriculum rather than using a variety of methods to help students achieve the expected learning. (Marshall and Tucker 1992, Resnick, Briars, and Lesgold (1992) and Spady (1991).

All Students Can Learn

Standards-Based Education (SBE) is strongly rooted in the belief that, all students can learn more and at higher levels. These concepts build on the notion that it is society's obligation to teach all of its children. (Rawls, 1971, Resnick and Simmons, 1993,) Resnick, Briars, and Lesgold (1992, p. 188) believe that if as a nation the United States is to move beyond offering high expectations for only the highest achieving students, the goals of education must shift from basic skills to an emphasis on complex skills and problem solving.

Time as a Factor in Learning

Resnick, Briars, and Lesgold (1992, p. 192) contend that achievement standards should be held constant, and time spent in school or on subject matter should be allowed to vary supporting the notion that if given time, students can learn what is required of them.

Assessment

Increasingly, traditional forms of assessment are being questioned by professionals and parents (Widmeyer Group, 1993, pp. 8-14). This has led to a reexamination of the way students are assessed in the United States. Proponents of higher objectives for student learning contend that these objectives require new forms of assessment.

Borko, Flory and Cumbo (1993) in a study of performance assessment found that teachers reported "new insights" regarding student reading and improved understanding about the skills of students who read below grade level. In math, teachers added the new assessment activities to instructional programs. Several of the teachers saw the new assessments as instructional tools, not assessments. Likewise, when Heibert and Davinroy (1993) examined performance assessments on literacy, they reported that teachers appeared to be reevaluating their views regarding their instruction and student learning.

Opportunity to Learn

One way of examining equity concerns that are associated with Standards-Based Education is to examine the Opportunity to Learn which is afforded to individual students and categories of students such as ethnic minorities and students with learning disabilities. According to O'Day and Smith (1992, p. 32) schools must be held accountable for student achievement and the circumstances of accountability must be defined. Standards alone are insufficient to cause the

schools to fully meet the needs of poor and minority students. Opportunity to Learn Standards must be established that evaluate educational inputs.

In reviewing several international studies comparing differences in student educational achievement, Stevens (1993a, p. 5) identifies four variables as elements of Opportunity to Learn Standards. They are:

* Content Coverage: investigates whether or not students covered the core curriculum for a particular grade level or subject area (for example, grade 4 reading or algebra).

* Content Exposure: questions the time allowed and the depth of teaching (time-on-task).

* Content Emphasis: determines which topics within the curriculum are selected for emphasis and which students are selected to receive low or higher order skills.

* Quality of Instructional Delivery: reveals how the teaching practices in the classroom impact academic achievement (coherent presentation of lessons).

Ferguson (1993), President of American College Testing (ACT), reports that students who enroll in a high school core curriculum obtain a higher score on the ACT and do better in college. In addition, Finn (1992, p. xiv), former Assistant U.S. Secretary of Education, points out that students in the United States spend less time working on academic skills than any other group of students in the industrialized world.

In a review of Chapter I reauthorization, Stevens (1993b, pp. 5-6) notes that significant discussion centered around the need to move beyond basic skills for Chapter I students and on to helping these students meet the expectations of higher national standards. The same issue must be raised for Students with Learning Disabilities (L.D.).

Basis of Special Education

The education of children with disabilities rests on the philosophy that these children are entitled to an education and to belong to a school and social community. The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) gave legal status to this philosophy through Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), respectively. The concept of a FAPE establishes the mandate of educating handicapped students at public expense. LRE is ideally used to limit the amount of time handicapped students spend in segregated educational settings. The Individualized Education Program is intended to set up how FAPE and LRE will be implemented. The remainder of this section will focus on two of these three concepts, (1) least restrictive environment and (2) the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Issues Regarding the Least Restrictive Environment

If students with L.D. are to be included in the movement toward higher expectations (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Shriner, 1992) for all students, where they receive their education becomes a larger part of an already emotionally charged

debate concerning full inclusion or partial segregation of students with disabilities. The belief that the education of students with disabilities is a shared responsibility was expressed by former Assistant Secretary of Education, Madeline Will, in her 1986 position paper, Educating Students with Learning Problems: A Shared Responsibility. It was her belief that much of the assistance offered only to small groups of students through special education pullout programs might be more appropriately provided in general education classes (Shevin, 1992, p. xvii). This concern comes into sharper focus as SBE and its emphasis on all students learning at higher levels becomes a central issue for education at the state and national level.

The Regular Education Initiative as described by Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) has three primary purposes: (1) consolidation of regular and special education, (2) greater numbers of students with disabilities served in general education with support from special education, and (3) the improvement of academic performance of students with mild and moderate disabilities as well as non-disabled at risk students (pp. 297-299).

Issues Regarding the Individualized Education Plan

The purpose of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is to address the individual needs of students with disabilities so that instruction may be specially designed for their needs.

Literature regarding IEPs does not necessarily support their ability to fulfill their stated purpose (Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict, & Coolidge, 1984, Epstein, Patton, Polloway, and Foley 1992, Singer and Butler, 1992).

The IEP has a significant number of problems associated with its writing and development. However, it is currently the only tool and process which causes educators to come together and consider the needs of individual students with disabilities.

High Academic Standards for Students with Learning Disabilities

Intelligence and Learning

Descriptions of Learning Disabilities highlight a variety of causes and symptoms that interfere with academic success, and intelligence is traditionally viewed as something that could be expressed as a single number representing the general ability or a G factor for an individual (Edwards, 1971, p. 199; Horn, 1989, p. 65). When intelligence is viewed as a general ability the methods used to teach children are narrowed to reflect this general ability. New theories of intelligence have begun to expand the meaning of intelligence and the ways that knowledge may be demonstrated.

Current researchers in the area of intelligence have put forth theories that look at intelligence as multi-faceted and support philosophy that all students can learn at higher academic levels, for example, Gardner's theory of Multiple

Intelligences. Gardner (1983, pp. 73-237) identified six intelligences: (1) Linguistic (2) Musical (3) Logical-Mathematical (4) Spatial (5) Bodily Kinesthetic (6) Personal-Inter and Intra.

The theories regarding cognitive ability and learning as described above are important to the study of Learning Disabilities and standards in that the regulations implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines learning disabilities as:

> "Specific learning disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations.

When the above description of a Learning Disability which emphasizes a variety of causes and manifestations is examined along with new theories of intelligence, we may begin to look at students classified as Learning Disabled in a new light.

High Academic Standards for Students With Learning Disabilities

Gartner and Lipski (1992) cite 50 recent studies that compared the academic performance of mainstreamed and segregated disabled students. They found that the average performance in academic areas was at the 80th percentile for the integrated group and at the 50th percentile for the non-integrated group (pp. 133-134).

In a survey of 12 experts in mathematics, special education, and assessment regarding the appropriateness of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

(NCTM) Standards, Shriner, Kim, Thurlow, and Ysseldyke (1993a, pp. 16-17) found that most respondents to the survey agreed that the NCTM standards should be addressed through the curriculum and evaluation in elementary education (K-4) for regular and special education students. Only a few respondents believed that the standards could be successfully implemented at the secondary level for disabled students.

Limits of the All Students Can Learn Concept

O'Day and Smith (1992), estimate that 2%-4% of children are so handicapped that their capacity to learn the kinds of material being considered is impaired (p. 73). Ysseldyke, Thurlow, McGrew and Shriner (1994) in a report on large scale assessment support this view.

Intelligence, Curriculum, Instruction and Opportunity to Learn and Students With Learning Disabilities

The ways that educators apply their knowledge of intelligence to curriculum and instruction has a significant impact on the learning opportunities of students with Learning Disabilities. If intelligence is looked at as a general factor, students with L. D. will be limited in their learning opportunities.

Trusdale and Abramson (1992) reported that successful experiences in general education for handicapped students may be dependent upon the combined factors of student abilities and placement in classes that are of interest to them and for which they have an appropriate skill and knowledge base.

Sands, Adams, and Stout (1993) note that a gap in the education of disabled students has been created as the result of the non-existence of a curriculum which can provide direction to teachers of disabled students (p. 4).

O'Day and Smith (1992, p. 33) believe that quality education is defined as the "opportunity" to learn. The elements of Opportunity to Learn include (1) Content Coverage, (2) Content Exposure, (3) Content Emphasis, and (4) Quality of Instructional Delivery (Stevens, 1993a, p. 5). The findings by Sands, Adams, and Stout (1993) indicate that there are widely differing beliefs on the part of the teachers of disabled students regarding the source of curriculum. This variability is cause to believe that opportunities to learn for these students may vary as well.

Content Coverage and Content Emphasis are highlighted in a study by Parker, Tindal and Hasbrouck (1991) in which they reviewed the writing instruction provided to Learning Disabled students and found that they did not appear to improve in writing skill over the course of the study. "This finding may be attributable to the very small amount of reading instruction provided in language arts resource rooms." (p. 70) A study by Greenwood (1991) of time, engagement and academic achievement of at risk and non-at-risk students, points out the importance of Content Exposure.

The following two studies provide insight into the importance of the Quality of Instruction provided to students with Learning Disabilities. Mastropieri and Scruggs (1992, p. 403) in a review of research regarding science instruction for students with Learning Disabilities reported that when instruction was activity

oriented it produced more effective learning than did direct instruction. In a study by Montague and Applegate (1993) which compared mathematical problem solving for students classified as Learning Disabled, gifted, and average it was determined that students with L.D. were not as proficient in applying problem solving strategies to mathematics as the other two groups. However, the students with L.D. were not significantly different from gifted or average students in computation skills. These researchers concluded that computation drill and practice are emphasized for students with L.D. and that they are not provided the opportunity to learn problem solving techniques (pp. 183-194).

IEPs and Standards-Based Education

Shriner, Kim, Thurlow, and Ysseldyke (1993b) offer the opinion that the IEP provides the structure of the student's education and provides a written account of what the disabled student must know and be able to do. In this description the IEP can be viewed as a tool for establishing the Opportunity to Learn for Students with Learning Disabilities.

The IEP according to, Shriner, Kim, Thurlow, and Ysseldyke (1993b, p. 1) was described by Gerardi, Grohe, Benedict, and Coolidge (1984) as "little more than paper work and wasted time". Shriner, Kim, Thurlow and Ysseldyke (1993b, pp. 4-22) examined the IEPs of 76 disabled students in two school districts in different states, one in the southwest, the other a mid-Atlantic state, to determine congruence between district math objectives and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) sample items as a reflection of national math

standards. Findings indicated IEPs reviewed in this study were nearly exclusively focused on lower mathematics skills identified as knowledge and computation. Fewer than 51% of the IEP objectives addressed problem solving.

THE CASE STUDY

Beliefs Regarding Student Learning and Achievement

This study focuses on beliefs regarding the concept that all students can learn. Students with Learning Disabilities as described above represent a population of disabled students who should be able to meet these standards. Research in policy implementation, however, indicates that decisions are made based on what those involved believe (Borko, Flory, and Cumbo, 1993). McLaughlin (1987) reminds us that policy implementation is modified at every step by those who must react to and explain it (p.174).

Educators engage in practices that are positive or negative, based on their beliefs (Oakes (1987 and Greene 1990). What individuals believe controls the way they respond to the world around them. Even negative practices occur becausc educators believe that they work. However, it may be that teachers who have high expectations for students maintain these expectations for all students, regardless of any label or classification.

My experience as a local Director of Special Education, Consultant in Special Education and Consultant in Student Assessment along with the passage of Colorado's H.B. 93-1313 combined to provide a catalyst for this study. My

interest in these issues grew from years of observing special and general education teachers in IEP meetings and teaching. Those who had very strong knowledge of their subject and high expectations also appeared to get the most from their special education students. They used high expectations and standards as the framework for their teaching. H.B. 93-1313 codified the potential for all students to be held to higher expectations and the frame work for a study of educator beliefs regarding the concept of all students can learn, with students who are identified as Learning Disabled providing a metaphor for all.

Methodology

This study examines the phenomenon of beliefs regarding a concept of student achievement. The focus of this study is on the beliefs of specific and particular individuals, as well as the group they represent.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the collection of data for this study:

(1) Do school board members, general education administrators, special education administrators, special education teachers, and general education teachers hold different beliefs, regarding the concept that all students can learn, when the concept is applied to students with Learning Disabilities?

(2) Do the beliefs of these individuals differ regarding the success of students with Learning Disabilities within the concept of all students can

learn in districts that are following different paths in the implementation of standards based education?

(3) Do these individuals hold beliefs regarding the opportunities to learn and resources that will be required if students with Learning Disabilities are to be successful in achieving the same standards as their non-disabled peers?

Informants

This study included two school board members, the superintendent, the curriculum director, one special education director, two principals, two special education teachers, and four general education teachers from each of the two school districts in the study.

Instruments

A set of 17 questions designed to open and sustain discussion regarding beliefs concerning the concept that all students can learn and the potential success of students with Learning Disabilities in a system of standards based education was developed. This instrument was used as a part of the interview with each subject in the case study.

Qualitative Procedures

Each district was selected based on its history regarding standards based education. The two members of the school board in each district were identified with the assistance of the central office staff. The central office staff also assisted in the selection of two middle schools which are representative of the district. The principal in each school was interviewed as well as a teacher of the Learning

Disabled. The principal in each school identified two general education teachers for interview (See Appendix C for Interview Schedule).

The Districts and Schools

Washington School District

Washington School District has a student population of approximately 18,000 students and is 78% white. Four point two percent of the students are in Chapter I programs, 19.53% are approved for free and reduced lunch and 13.26% are in special education.

The district has been developing standards since 1989 and is involved in several formal school reform efforts including Re:Learning and a multi district state project to improve student performance in math and science funded by the National Science Foundation.

Washington School District Middle Schools

Pennsylvania Middle School has a student population of 950 and is 88 percent white, 8 percent hispanic, .75 percent black, 2.5 percent asian/pacific islander, and .75 percent American Indian. Seven point two percent of the students are approved for free and reduced lunch and 12.3 percent are in special education. Pennsylvania Middle school is located at the edge of the school district in an area that is surrounded by open fields. The school itself is in the center of an established neighborhood.

New York Middle School has a student population of 1,000 and is 82 percent White, 13.7 percent Hispanic, 1.6 percent Black, 1.4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent American Indian. Nine point nine percent of the students are approved for free and reduced lunch and 12.7 percent are in special education. New York Middle School is located in an area with established neighborhoods and older middle income homes. The school underwent extensive remodeling over the summer of 1994.

Montgomery School District

Montgomery School District has a student population of approximately 6,500 and is 50% white and 44% hispanic. Seven percent of the students are in Chapter I programs, 39.27 percent are approved for free and reduced lunch and 10.74% are in special education. Montgomery School District began working on their version of Standards Based-Education in 1990. The district has put forth a significant amount of effort to assist parents, teachers, and students in understanding and using standards based education. This district has no major projects or funding for Standards Based-Education.

Montgomery School District Middle Schools

Tennessee Middle School has a student population of 750 and is 55.12 percent white, 38.78 percent hispanic, 1.95 percent black, .7 percent asian/pacific islander, and 3.46 percent American Indian. Thirty-nine point five percent of the students are approved for free and reduced lunch and 13.7 percent are in special education. Tennessee Middle school is located in an area where residential

neighborhoods overlap with industry. This overlap is a reminder of the industrial nature of this Montgomery community.

Georgia Middle School has a student population of 500 and is 43.38 percent white, 49.7 percent hispanic, 2.9 percent black, 1.52 percent asian/pacific islander, and 2.5 percent American Indian. Nine point nine percent of the students are approved for free and reduced lunch and 12.7 percent are in special education. Georgia Middle School is located in a residential section of the Montgomery community, however, the industrial section of the community is only a few blocks from the school.

FINDINGS REGARDING BELIEFS AND RELATED VARIABLES

Procedures

In an effort to distinguish between individuals who believe that all students can learn and those who do not hold this belief a third middle group emerged, identified as ambivalent because they expressed beliefs that reflected both positions (See below for an explanation of ambivalent).

Definition and Discussion of High Belief, Low Belief, and Ambivalent High Belief

High Belief

Individuals classified as having a High Belief expressed views that Standards Based Education could or should be used to close the learning gap between students with Learning Disabilities and their non-disabled peers. These individuals seem to view intelligence and consequently learning as a multi faceted process.

Low Belief

Individuals classified as having a Low Belief expressed views that students with Learning Disabilities can not be expected to achieve academically at levels which exceed current expectations. These individuals seem to view intelligence and consequently learning as a single faceted process.

Ambivalent

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language Second Edition Unabridged 1987 defines Ambivalence as:

> 1. (N) Uncertainty or fluctuation esp. when caused by inability to make a choice or by a simultaneous desire to say or do opposing or conflicting things.
>
> 2. (Psychol) The coexistence within a individual of positive and negative feelings toward the same person, object or action simultaneously drawing him or her in opposite directions.

The implementation of Standards Based-Education and its underlying assumption that all students can learn represent a significant change in the way education is provided. Marris (1975) tells us that "Whether the change is sought or resisted, and happens by chance or design; whether we look at it from the standpoint of reformers or those they manipulate, of individuals or institutions, the response is characteristically ambivalent (p. 7)".

Fullan and Stieglbaur (1991) remind us that any change, including progress, creates ambivalence. (p. 345) As noted above, holding out the belief that all

students can learn including students with Learning Disabilities represents a significant change for many educators. From this prospective each individual interviewed in this study might be seen as ambivalent. The groups classified as High Belief or Low Belief clearly expressed views that placed them at one or the other of these two ends of the continuum of belief, however, the group classified as ambivalent expressed views representing both high belief and low belief.

Finally Sincoff (1990) asserts that ambivalence is not the equivalent of conflict. "Rather, ambivalence is a subset of conflict, distinguishable from conflict primarily by the presence of both positive and negative poles" (p. 46).

Given the examples provided above it is not surprising that certain individuals expressed beliefs which might be interpreted as ambivalent.

Individuals in the middle group expressed situational views toward students with Learning Disabilities regarding achievement of the standards which:

- imply positive and negative feelings toward student success,
- devalued the disability (ie. students with Learning Disabilities can not learn this material)
- demonstrated compassion benevolence (i.e. they should be expected to meet the standards without frustration)

Those individuals classified as ambivalent displayed several characteristics which indicated conflicting views. In some cases they appeared to believe that intelligence is static but they also wanted students with L.D. to achieve the standards. In other instances they expressed an interest in students with L.D.

learning at higher levels but without frustration. In some cases the respondents had not examined their beliefs and expressed both high and low expectations as they began to examine their beliefs.

Summary of Views by District and School

High belief in the concept that all students can learn came almost exclusively from the ranks of central office administrators. They include the Superintendent, Special Education Director, and Curriculum Coordinator from both School Districts. The Principal from New York Middle School in Washington School District and the Principal and Special Education Teacher from Georgia Middle School in Montgomery School District were the only building level staff that fell into the high belief category.

Both Board Members from Washington School District fell into the Ambivalent category. In the case of Montgomery School District both board members fell into the Low Belief category.

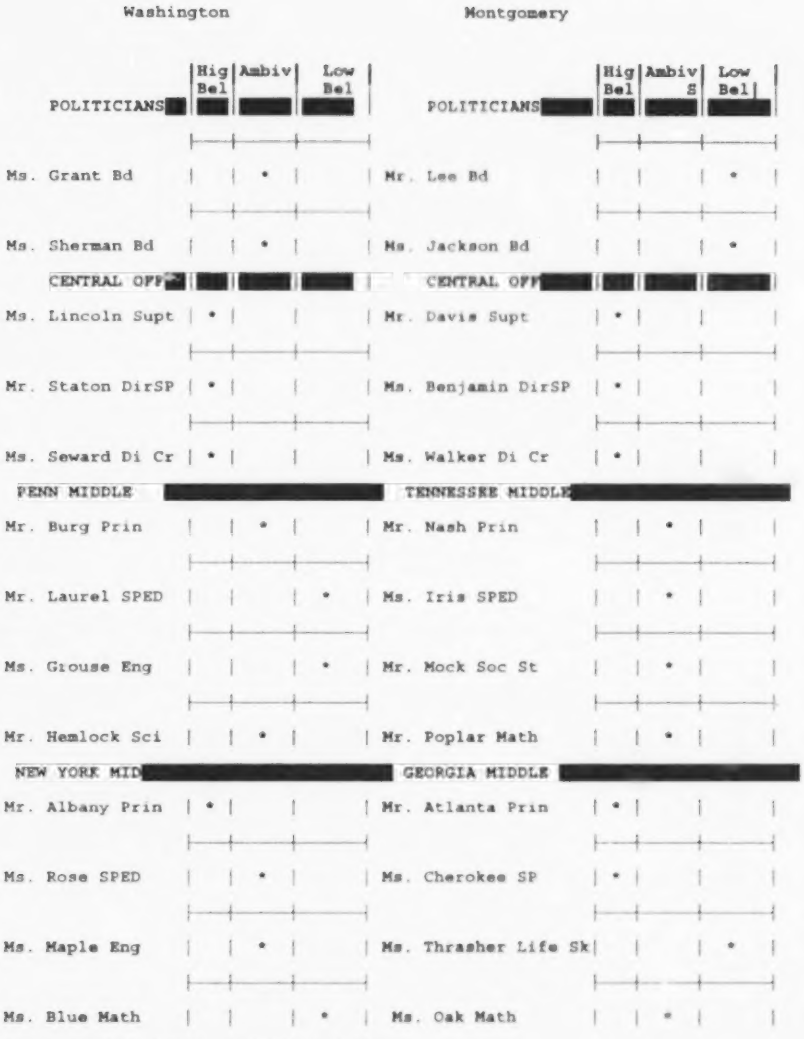
The entire current staff at Tennessee Middle School in Montgomery District fell into the Ambivalent category. At Pennsylvania Middle school in Washington District two staff members fell into the Ambivalent Category. The Special Education Teacher and the English Teacher fell into the Low Belief Category.

At New York Middle School in Washington District and Georgia Middle School in Montgomery District staff members fell into all four categories.

Of the individuals at the school level, those individuals that others might look to for leadership concerning students with Learning Disabilities achieving the standards, the following patterns occurred: Two of the four principals fell into the High Belief Group and two fell into the Ambivalent group. Two special education teachers were classified as Ambivalent. One Special Education teacher fell into the High Belief group, one fell into the Low Belief Group. There were no patterns which emerged to explain the differences between schools.

Table 1 provides a graphic description of the beliefs held by individuals and the culture they represent.

TABLE 1



Analyses of Additional Variables

A further analysis of opinions regarding certain variables related to students with Learning Disabilities and Standards Based-Education was conducted (See Table 2). In most instances these variables were selected a priori as suggested by the literature. Two variables emerged as themes in reviewing the transcripts of interviews. The variables included a priori are the following:

(1) Location of Educational Services

(a) Full Inclusion

(b) Pull Out

(c) Problems With Inclusion

(2) Individual Needs

(a) Individual Needs

(b) Individual Needs Discounted

(3) Origin of Curriculum

(a) Modification of District Curriculum

(b) Individual Curriculum

(4) Opportunity to Learn

(5) Money

(6) Staff Development

(7) More Staff

(8) Time

(a) Time as a Tool

(b) Time as a Problem.

The variables which emerged as a result of analysis of the transcripts are; (9) Collaboration (10) Vocational. Table 2 compares the number on informants in each group (High Belief - 9 informants, Ambivalent - 11 informants, and Low Belief - 6 informants who had at least one occurrence of a statement heading.

Under Location of Educational Services, Full Inclusion of students with Learning Disabilities was supported more frequently by the High Belief than it was by the Ambivalent or the Low Belief group. The Low Belief group had the lowest level of support for full inclusion. The Low Belief Group on the other hand expressed more problems with inclusion than the High Belief or Ambivalent groups. Only one individual in the High Belief group reported having a problem with inclusion, this was related to her perception of the all or nothing nature of inclusion.

The importance of individual needs was mentioned with relative consistency across all three groups. Modification of the district curriculum was mentioned by the High Belief group with more regularity than the Ambivalent or Low belief group.

Opportunity to Learn was important to all three groups. Money was of greater concern for the Ambivalent Group and the Low Group than it was for the High Group, whereas staff development was of greater concern to the high group than the other two groups. The Low Belief Group commented on the need for more staff if students with Learning Disabilities are included in Standards Based-Education.

Under the heading of Time, the Ambivalent group mentioned Time as a Tool slightly more frequently than the High Group and significantly more than the Low Group. It wasn't mentioned at all by the High Group. Collaboration between

general educators and Special education was mentioned with almost equal consistency by all three groups.

TABLE 2

FULL GROUP COMPARISON

	Location of Ed Services			Individual Needs		Origin of Curr		OTL	Money	Staff Devel	More Staf	Time		Colab	Voc
	Full In	Pull Out	Prob W Inc	Indv Need	Indiv Need	Mod Dis	Ind Cur	OTL	Money	Staff Devel	More Staf	Time as Tool	Time as Prob	Colab	Voc
High NUM	7	2	1	6	0	8	0	7	3	5	2	4	0	6	0
Ambv NUM	6	4	0	8	1	9	7	7	7	4	6	6	4	6	1
Low NUM	1	3	2	4	1	4	1	3	3	2	5	1	2	4	3

Informants offered a wide range of views and opinions regarding the additional variables. These viewsand perceptions cut across all three categories. For example, an individual classified as high belief and another classified as low belief may express a problem with inclusion. However, their reasons may be very different.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings Question 1: School board members, general education administrators, special education teachers, and general education teachers do not hold different beliefs, as a class or group of individuals regarding the concept that all students can learn, when the concept is applied to students with Learning Disabilities. Central office administrators which includes superintendents, special

education directors, and curriculum directors were classified as High Belief whereas building level administrators (principals) were split between High Belief and Ambivalent.

The four board members were split along district lines, the two from Washington District were classified as Ambivalent. The two board members from Montgomery District were classified in the Low Belief category.

The four special education teachers were classified in each category. One was classified as High, two as Ambivalent, and one as Low. None of the general education teachers fell into the High group. Seven fell into the Ambivalent category. Three general education teachers fell into the Low Belief category.

Findings Question 2: The most significant difference between districts was at the board member level. The two board members in each district fell into the same broad category by district. Ambivalent for the board members from Washington District and Low for the Montgomery District board members.

Based on the number of individuals in each category, schools within the two districts were more different than schools across the two districts. Pennsylvania and Tennessee middle school were generally less supportive of the concept that all students can learn whereas New York and Georgia middle schools were generally more supportive of the concept that all students can learn. The only apparent explanation is that individuals develop beliefs over time based on experience and previous beliefs.

Findings Question 3: It was determined that school board members, general education administrators, special education administrators, special education teachers, and general education teachers, hold beliefs regarding the opportunities to learn and resources that will be required if students with Learning Disabilities are to be successful in achieving the same standards as their non-disabled peers. What appears to be most interesting is the ways in which these beliefs were distributed across the categories of (1) High Belief (2) Low , and (3) Ambivalent.

These variables will be explored below.

Not only did the frequency of number of respondents who referred to Full Inclusion decrease from the High Belief Group to the Low Belief Group, but the emphasis appeared to change. For example:

> High Belief: You know, I think its very, very hard to, in an inclusion model, to have totally separate IEP goals for your special education children.
>
> Ambivalent: I think it also allows them to have the socialization which I think is very important for L.D. kids to be able to be with their peers and have the socialization process go on.
>
> Ambivalent: You could see the elimination of an L.D. classroom to where the children are mainstreamed all day.
>
> Low Belief: This way L.D. Kids are exposed to a little more general curriculum. They are exposed to more incidental learning.

In the above example, comments changed from the importance of Full Inclusion in teaching students with Learning Disabilities, what non-disabled students learn, to socialization and then to an economic necessity and finally exposure and incidental learning.

Individual Needs were mentioned by an almost equal percentage of members of all three categories.

> High Belief: I think strategy needs to be geared so that we meet the needs and that's so all the students can realize success.
>
> Ambivalent: So I think what we're going to have to do is make sure that we break it down and really spell out what standards they can achieve.
>
> Ambivalent: I think we need to go back to or teach kids where they are, not necessarily this is the sixth grade curriculum and everyone has to fit into it.
>
> Low Belief: Well, I would say the modification has to be there if they have special needs, they obviously are identified as not being able to succeed without some kind of changes in the basic curriculum.

Concern for Individual Needs seems to range from using these needs to support learning to excusing students from meeting the standards.

As for the variable, Modify District Curriculum, individuals classified in the various categories seem to make statements that are more or less equal.

> High Belief: Whether it's for special ed, whether it's for bilingual education, we don't plan separate curriculums for any programs. We're defining what outcomes we want for students, and then we're trying to achieve that for all students.
>
> Ambivalent: I believe basically the curriculum's the same as it is for anyone else.
>
> Ambivalent: I always look at the curriculum of the regular ed and I try to follow what goes on in that regular classroom so I try to fit it in, the best that I can with every student I staff.
>
> Low Belief: And then for others, the curriculum is just slightly modified, we expect the same thing we do out of the other kids.

For this variable the primary difference between high belief and the other categories may be that the high belief group sees curriculum as related to the

standards and what is learned while for the low belief group curriculum is something that students do. The High Belief group, based on their classification, are individuals who expect all students to achieve the standards. That expectation matches their comments regarding the modification of the district curriculum. The Ambivalent and Low groups are by definition unsure or convinced that all students can achieve the standards. This does not match their comments on Modifying the District Curriculum, unless they don't see the curriculum as what is learned by students so that they can meet the standard.

Opportunity to Learn, like Individual Needs, was mentioned fairly consistently by members of all three categories:

> High Belief: So that if students don't get it the first time and with one approach, they have an alternative approach.
>
> Ambivalent: If my students need to know this, then I have to make sure that the activities and things I do are heading toward that goal.
>
> Ambivalent: I don't think if they've not been taught it, I don't think they should be tested on it.
>
> Low Belief: I would definitely be concerned with working with the special education teacher, saying okay, we've gone over this, here's where they need to be, here's what they've seen.

For this variable respondents appear to hold the common view that students must have the opportunity to learn through content exposure, coverage and emphasis.

The need for More Staff was commented on by more members of the Low Belief group than either of the other two groups. Examples from each category are:

High Belief: I think it also means that placement and assignment of special ed staff's going to have to be a lot more plentiful.

Ambivalent: I see two areas I think we're going to need more personnel, whether it's in the form of para-professionals, or more L.D. teachers.

Ambivalent: Well, we're already dancing as fast as we can to give the students the success they have now trying to meet their IEP goals. I just think that there would have to be more teachers.

Low Belief: They need smaller classrooms to put them into, inclusion is only going to work unless there are fewer people to include them with so a regular ed teacher has some time to get to them. We need more and more special ed professionals to work with them, that are trained specifically in their need areas.

Possibly the difference the larger percentage of low and ambivalent informants who commented on the need for more staff can be explained by the fact that with the exception of board members these are the individuals who work most closely with students and therefore feel the most pressure.

Implications of the Findings

The fact that Central Office Administrators were the only group which consistently held High Beliefs Regarding the concept that all students can learn supports Garvar-Pinhas and Schmelkin (1989) findings and earlier findings reported by these researchers, that the further removed one is from the classroom, the more positive the attitude toward mainstreaming for academic purposes. (pp. 39-41)

That there was little difference between districts, and individuals fall into the full range of categories indicates that beliefs regarding all students can learn is highly personal and driven by previous experiences such as Greene's (1990) report

on research by Good and Haller which indicates that teacher expectations for students come from a variety of sources including student: (1) performance on tests, (2) performance on assignments, (3) speech and language patterns, (4) gender, (5) race, (6) classroom behavior, (7) socio-economic status, (8) physical appearance, (9) special education labels, (10) ethnicity, and (11) group placement (p. 44).

Warner, Havighurst, and Loeb (1944) encourage educating all students to the best of their ability but warn that educating too many to a very high level will be frustrating to the individual and society. This frustration, they argue, will result from intense competition for a limited number of high level jobs and individuals being forced to take positions, that are not equal to their education.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) on the other hand contend that real educational change is not possible because the current structure of schools fulfills the role of providing workers and managers based on non school factors such as wealth, ethnicity and even handicapping condition. In other words, schools help to maintain the status quo by holding high expectations of only a few students.

The High Belief group might be seen as wishing to change the situation as viewed by Warner, Havighurst, and Loeb and Bowles and Gintis. The Ambivalent group could be seen as recognizing the need for such a change but are unsure of what to do. The Low Belief Group expresses very little desire for change and supports the status quo.

Implications for Policy Makers

District policy makers need to be aware that simply because they have provided information and training the job is not done. District administrators by virtue of their position are aware of and involved in educational change and its purpose. School Board members have other jobs and responsibilities which may not be related to an educator's view of the world. Teachers are working on a day to day basis with students and their problems, they may have a difficult time separating what is from what might be.

State and federal policy makers need to recognize that they cannot mandate new belief systems. When they legislate that all students can learn, they need to be open to the fact that those who must insure that all students can learn require time and assistance to implement such a concept.

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Publicity about rights, responsibilities, etc. We've talked about it in our SAFE groups, and a presentation by Ginny, peer mediators have stopped by and role-played, but we could do more--posters around school? We need to continue efforts to publicizing the plan. It's catching on, children are beginning to verbalize about rights of others. Continued effort to educate parents. I still get plans for change signed, but with no written plan. Maybe we need to follow up with a phone call. What about a marquee with Golden Ticket winners--to publicize those we have "caught" being responsible.

Encourage consistency--do all aggressive acts get plan for change?

More training and discussions with staff over JD--I still feel a need for more background, information, etc.

More time to deal with behavior problems as they occur--my circumstance (specialist) makes it impossible to "step out" of the teaching area to address an issue immediately.

To have a consequence accompany the plan for change.

Even more parental involvement.

A full time principal actively involved in the discipline program.

Enforce the idea that a reasonable plan be written by the student and parent on the plan for change. Just a signature would not allow reentry to the classroom.

To have all parents' support of our discipline plan and to follow through at home by coming up with a plan for change with their child that may also include home consequences.

Parents' view of their role in the plan for change.

My assigned role at Jefferson is:

___Office staff

__6_Support staff

_2__Specialist teachers

_8__Classroom teachers

_2__Other